

CLAIMS

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5 1. In a video decoder system, a method for forming a program guide allowing a User to select a function, comprising the steps of:

a) receiving program guide information for display from at least one source, said program guide information including User selectable menu icons;

10 b) generating program map information in said decoder for associating a User selectable menu icon with access data enabling initiation of communication between said decoder and said external device in response to selection of said menu icon presented in said program guide information for display;

15 c) retrieving access data from memory, said access data enabling initiation of communication between said decoder and a device external to said video decoder in response to User selection of said displayed program guide menu option; and

20 d) formatting said program guide for display.

2. A method according to claim 1, including the step of:

generating program map information for associating different displayed User selectable menu icons with different communication links.

25 3. A method according to claim 1, including the step of:

generating said program map information to further associate said User selectable menu icon with said access data and a data identifier for acquiring data from said external device.

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4. A method according to claim 1, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating a
displayed User selectable menu icon with both request access data
5 and response access data for bi-directional communication.

5. A method according to claim 4, wherein
said request access data includes one of a) a telephone/fax
number, b) an Internet identifier or address code and c) conditional
10 access data; and

said response access data includes at least one of a) a data
identifier, b) a channel number, and c) a transponder number.

6. A method according to claim 4, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating
15 different displayed User selectable menu icons with different address
representative codes corresponding to the addresses of information
sources.

20 7. A method according to claim 1, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating
different displayed User selectable menu icons with different address
representative codes corresponding to the addresses of at least two
sources selected from: a) a storage source; b) a satellite broadcast
25 source; c) a terrestrial broadcast source; d) a cable broadcast source;
e) a computer source; f) a radio transmission source and g) a source
accessed via telephone lines.

8. A method according to claim 1, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating
different displayed User selectable menu icons with different
5 conditional access information for determining access to programs
based upon User entitlement.

9. A method according to claim 1, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating
10 different displayed User selectable menu icons with different physical
communication network parameters.

10. A method according to claim 1, including the step of:
deriving said access data from said received program
15 guide information.

11. A method according to claim 1, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating
different displayed User selectable menu icons with different address
20 representative codes corresponding to the addresses of information
sources provided to said decoder by a User.

12. A method according to claim 11, wherein
said address representative codes include at least one of
25 a) telephone/fax number representative information, and b) Internet
address representative information.

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13. In a video decoder system, a method for forming a program guide allowing a User to select a function, comprising the steps of:

5 a) receiving program guide information from at least one source;

b) generating a menu icon for display in a displayed program guide, said menu icon permitting a User to initiate communication between said video decoder and a device external to
10 said video decoder;

c) generating program map information in said decoder for associating said menu icon with access data enabling establishment of bi-directional communication between said decoder and said external device in response to selection of said menu icon presented in said program guide information for display;

d) incorporating program guide information and said menu icon in a program guide; and

e) formatting said program guide for display.

20 14. A method according to claim 13, including the step of: deriving said access data from said program guide information.

25 15. A method according to claim 13, including the step of: generating program map information for associating different displayed User selectable menu icons with different communication links.

30 generating said program map information to further associate said menu icon with said access data and a data identifier for acquiring data from said external device.

16. A method according to claim 15, including the step of:
associating different access data with corresponding
different communication links.

17. A method according to claim 13, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating said
menu icon with both request access data and response access data.

18. A method according to claim 17, wherein
said request access data includes one of a) a telephone/fax
number, b) an Internet identifier or address code and c) conditional
access data; and

said response access data includes at least one of a) a data
identifier, b) a channel number, and c) a transponder number.

19. A method according to claim 17, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating
different displayed User selectable menu icons with different address
representative codes corresponding to the addresses of information
sources.

20. A method according to claim 13, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating
different displayed User selectable menu icons with different address
representative codes corresponding to the addresses of at least two
sources selected from: a) a storage source; b) a satellite broadcast
source; c) a terrestrial broadcast source; d) a cable broadcast source;
e) a computer source; f) a radio transmission source and g) a source
accessed via telephone lines.

21. A method according to claim 13, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating
different displayed User selectable menu icons with different
5 conditional access information for determining access to programs
based upon User entitlement.

22. A method according to claim 13, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating
10 different displayed User selectable menu icons with different physical
communication network parameters.

23. A method according to claim 13, including the step of:
generating program map information for associating
15 different displayed User selectable menu icons with different address
representative codes corresponding to the addresses of information
sources provided to said decoder by a User.

24. A method according to claim 23, wherein
20 said address representative codes include at least one of
a) telephone/fax number representative information, and b) Internet
address representative information.

25. A method according to claim 13, including the step of:
25 generating program map information for associating
different packet identifiers (PIDs) with program guide information
from different sources.

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26. In a video decoder system, a method for forming a program guide allowing a User to select a function, comprising the steps of:

5 a) receiving program guide information from at least one source;

b) generating a menu icon for display in a displayed program guide, said menu icon permitting a User to initiate communication between said video decoder and a device external to said video decoder;

10 c) generating program map information associating said menu icon with a communication protocol and both request access data and response access data enabling establishment of communication between said decoder and said external device in response to selection of said menu icon presented in said program guide information for display;

15 d) incorporating program guide information and said menu icon in a program guide; and

e) formatting said program guide for display.

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